

shutterstock

# Contributor Success Guide





## What customers are searching for

Through search data and listening to feedback, we know what customers are looking for. They are searching for stock content that includes these qualities.



### Authenticity

Images that illustrate the everyday.  
Images that illustrate the everyday, as life happens. Real moments, captured.



### Diversity

Diverse content that includes people of various ages, abilities, genders, sexualities, and ethnicities.



### Locality

A business meeting in London may look different than one in Japan. Showcase local culture.



### Variety

Shoot distinct and unique variations of the same scene to give customers options.



### Creativity

Images that can't be found anywhere else. Your unique content has value here.





## Finding inspiration

Here are six places to get your creative ideas started.

**1. Social media**

Trending topics are a great place to start.  
Find us @ShutterstockContributors on Instagram.

**2. The news**

What are the latest headlines? Trending destinations, events, or even people.

**3. Fashion trends**

What colors are popular? What clothing are people wearing?

**4. Technology**

We're always looking for new images of that latest and greatest in tech.

**5. Holidays and celebrations**

What are the popular events happening in your area or where you travel to?

**6. Arts and culture**

Keep an eye on what's happening at galleries and museums. Take cues from the old, and the new.

## Creating images that actually sell

We're breaking the mold of traditional stock. Shutterstock is interested in images that tell and sell stories.

Content that earns money has the following characteristics.

**Quality:** Your image is sharp, and high-resolution.

**Versatility:** Content has the ability to be used for a wide variety of purposes.

**Unique:** You've created, and uploaded a unique scene unlike anything else.







## The Ingredients of Top-Selling Stock

- 1. Commercial value**  
The more usable an image is for a variety of buyers, the more it's considered to have commercial value.
- 2. Diverse locality**  
Images that show the diversity of specific locations. For example, Japanese farmer harvesting salt on the coastline of Suzu.
- 3. Room for text**  
Customers frequently purchase content for ad usage. Consider creating imagery with negative space for the purchaser to do text overlays.
- 4. Emotional**  
Images that showcase emotions. The happy, the sad, and the in-between in real moments.
- 5. Aspiring real moments**  
A lifestyle that may be desired, but balanced in real-life, authentic images and videos. Create content that feels realistic and achievable.



## How to upload your first submission

- 1. Read Shutterstock submission guidelines**  
These guidelines explain appropriate content to upload, legal rights and responsibilities. [submit.shutterstock.com/guidelines](https://submit.shutterstock.com/guidelines)
- 2. Evaluate your content**  
Does your image have commercial value?  
Would it be used for an advertising or editorial purpose?  
If your content fits this description, upload!
- 3. Check the quality, then upload**  
View your images magnified. Ensure there are no noise or defects before upload.
- 4. Include appropriate metadata and keywords**  
Better keywords = better sales. Make sure your keywords are accurate to each individual image.
- 5. Submit**  
Once you are satisfied, submit! Upload your content at [submit.shutterstock.com](https://submit.shutterstock.com)

Once you've finished uploading, keep an eye on your inbox for acceptance. If you have rejected content, don't get discouraged. Keep improving, and try submitting to Shutterstock again!



## Keywording

Keywords are words that customers may use to search for your images with. Here are a few tips on writing successful keywords.

### 25-45 accurate keywords

Per image. Include multi word keywords such as “sandy beach” or “organic lettuce”.

### Think like a customer

Picture the person most likely to download your image. What do they search?

### Unique titles and descriptions

Be punchy and descriptive. They should be as accurate as possible. Don't batch title!

### Don't spam

Irrelevant keywords will bring your content to the wrong customer, resulting in a loss of potential sales.

### Accurately describe people

Don't use generic terms to describe people. Be descriptive to your models specific ethnicity, gender, and age.







## 5 reasons images get rejected

Our reviewers are responsible for quality control and enforcement of legal and editorial standards. Here are some top reasons content gets rejected and solutions to remember.

1. **Releases: Incorrect or missing model and property releases**  
Solution: Always have model releases on hand, and fact-check before you submit.
2. **Quality: Content with focus, composition, lighting or noise issues.**  
Solution: Check our blog for educational tips before you shoot, and magnify your image before submitting to check for flaws.
3. **Footage Quality: Clips that contain visible noise, pixelation, or compression artifacts.**  
Solution: Go to our YouTube Tutorials for video educational material. Check the quality on mobile and desktop before submitting.
4. **Metadata: Keywords that are irrelevant, and non-English metadata.**  
Solution: Use our Keyword Tool before submitting, and ensure all keywords are accurate.
5. **Copyright and IP: Images and clips that include intellectual property or copyrighted material**  
Solution: Familiarize yourself with the Known Image Restrictions. Ensure there are no distinguishable cues referencing existing commercial properties.







## Glossary

### **Contributor**

This refers to you! A contributor is a photographer, videographer, composer or illustrator who creates and contributes to Shutterstock.

### **Royalty Free (RF)**

When a customer licenses an image from you, they can use the image multiple times without multiple fees.

### **Subscription**

Our customers can sign up for a monthly subscription, which allows them to download content daily. Each download generates revenue for you.

### **Stock**

The industry term for stock collections. Imagery can come from anyone, from high-end professionals to the general public.

### **Commercial Use**

Refers to images used in advertisements, product packaging, and other marketing channels to promote a good or service. Releases are required.

### **Editorial Use**

Depicts a newsworthy subject or event and will not be allowed to be used for commercial purposes without the permission of the subject.

### **Copyright**

A form of legal protection that gives the authors of a creative work the exclusive right to display, reproduce, distribute, and financially benefit from the work they create.

### **Metadata**

Information about an image. For example, keywords used to describe an image are considered metadata.



## Ready to start submitting to Shutterstock?

Start earning money as a creative artist within minutes by joining our contributor community.

Visit [submit.shutterstock.com](https://submit.shutterstock.com) to start earning money from your creative work.

### Need more tips?

- Signup or Login  
[submit.shutterstock.com](https://submit.shutterstock.com)
- Contributor Support Center  
[shutterstock.com/contributorsupport](https://shutterstock.com/contributorsupport)
- Contributor Blog  
[shutterstock.com/blog/contributors](https://shutterstock.com/blog/contributors)
- Shutterstock Tutorials  
[youtube.com/channel/UCKyVN7fBTaQ3np4W007IK9A](https://youtube.com/channel/UCKyVN7fBTaQ3np4W007IK9A)
- The Shot List  
[shutterstock.com/explore/the-shot-list](https://shutterstock.com/explore/the-shot-list)
- Download the Contributor App  
[shutterstock.com/explore/contributor-mobile-app](https://shutterstock.com/explore/contributor-mobile-app)